

MRS. W. A. DENNIS
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SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Feb. 20-1934.

my dear Clarence,

I read over your letter very carefully and like yourself I felt discouraged over the length of time and amount of work you must do before you are ready to bring out a single labeled "Dennis, Surgeon". However after thinking it over I decided to talk with Dr. Ritchie. He and Dad went through medical school together and were close friends all these years and he would have a real interest in your best opportunities. Also I

knew he had recently gone over
this matter very carefully in
regard to his dear son Wallie.
so that his information would be
recent. so I took your letter to
him and he cleared up many
things in my own mind. For
instance, as Dr Zimmerman put
it, "it would depend on how
much Dad's friends could do for
you" - that is, turn work your
way. you might label yourself a
surgeon but, until a certain amount
of time had elapsed and you had
a certain amount of experience, a
patient would hesitate to trust his
life in your hands. you might
much better be in a hospital where
you are getting the best experience
and the most in a few years time

where, with good work, you are building up a prestige for yourself, so that at the end of the nine years spent in Johns Hopkins you may walk out with a reputation so well established that no one would hesitate to refer work to you - provided there is any to be referred, as I'll explain later. Meanwhile you have room, board, and later a small salary or fellowship. Many do not stay the full nine years but four or five or six give just that much prestige and experience most valuable - much more than you would be able to get in private practice - which would mean general practice, working toward surgery until you have gained a clientele and confidence of your patients.

With a few words Dr. Ritchie made clear to me that the whole practice of medicine has changed tremendously since the time he and Dad started in. Most doctors are trying to do their own surgery and are not referring cases to the surgeon as they did in the past. Also, their work is much of it contract work, that is, the man working for the Great Northern Railroad, being in need of an operation for appendicitis goes to the G.N. surgeon. The man working for the West + Duick Co. goes to the surgeon of that company. That trend has been growing for years and is quite commonly established now.

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You may remember that Dad was
the consulting surgeon for the
great northern Railroad and the
surgeon for the Great Western.
I think much that Dr. Ritchie
said was a repetition of the
things Dr. Busch had said and
evidently what Dr. Zimmerman
wrote you but it clarified the
conditions to my own mind.

as for the financial outlook -
it is a long hard pull anyway
for a man in medicine and
surgery is perhaps one step slower.
During the last few years of
business depression, many of the
doctors here have been very hard

pressed. Some few have had to
close up offices entirely, some
are far behind in rents and
other bills. Mrs. Burch said she
heard Dr. Foley say that he hadn't
collected enough for two years
to pay office expenses, let alone
household and family expenses.
and he has one of the largest
practices here. He is lucky, of course,
to have private means.

Dr. Burch's talk has been so
pessimistic that I have been
amused. Of course he himself
is "sitting pretty" but all his
views as expressed to me are
black - about medicine and
financial conditions. He has painted
things so black, that my reaction
has been to discount what he says.

Perhaps it was only badly expressed when he was tired because ~~his~~ he is not a morbid person. He and Mrs. Beech are spending a month in Florida. Katherine and Glen are stationed in Washington for five months when Glen is doing some special economics for the government & think.

Dr. Beech said before he left that he thought some service this next summer here at the Anker Hospital would be a good thing for you. He also said that he thought to continue the service at Johns Hopkins Hospital working toward the Resident would be the very best training for you. If you could get the appointment, no one favors your taking any part of the four year course at any other school, after all when you are getting the very best the country offers, why change? and there is a prestige goes with the name "Johns Hopkins," all think the two months there in Obstetrics this summer would be a fine experience, if you can get it.

Now as to the plans Dr. Ritchie has made for Wallie and which he felt might be good for you since you both wish to take up surgery. Wallie had four years at Johns Hopkins, graduating from the medical school there. He spent one summer

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in Edinburg studying Pathology
and Anatomy. He had one year
internship (rotating service) at
union memorial Hospital in
Baltimore, one year service on the
faculty of U. of Minn. doing Pathology
and studying Pathology. Now he
has a three years fellowship at
the U. of Minn. Hospital. He is
working like the dickens. He has
one night a month off, I believe.
He is engaged to Alice Otis and I
believe she sits at home just
hoping he may have a minute
during the day when he will
have time to telephone her.
When they will marry, I don't
know. But of course she will

have her own private income
and Wallie will have the
backing of a very large and
influential family of winterers.
Then you are! It is not especially
bright for immediate financial
results. But I don't think anyone
ever expects that of a man
starting in medicine. Dad. consider-
ed himself fortunate to be taken
into the firm of Wheaton and
Rogers, where for two years he
was paid twenty-five dollars a
month (no room or board), as a
special favor he was allowed to
open a cot and sleep in the
office at night. He had a bottle
of milk for breakfast, a free lunch
with beer at one of the saloons
so common then, and a twenty
five cent dinner. He managed to go

to the opera occasionally when he and Dr. Goodrich sat in the gallery. It was stiff times and hard work and a long slow pull. There is more competition now. He was married a thirty-two and his wedding trip was a gift of the doctors with whom he was then associated. He couldn't have afforded it himself. We were married when he was thirty-seven and then he had enough ahead to study abroad for a year with a wee nest egg in reserve. It was then he specialized in surgery.

I believe all this is explained to the best of my ability, if there is any obscurity let me know and I'll do my best to find out.

Dr. Ritchie said he would inquire around at the U. and see if there was any likelihood of your being able to get this same fellowship here in two or three years if you thought you wanted it. He will let me know after a while. Not necessary for you to write him at present. Be sure to write Dr. Zimmerman and thank him for his advice if you haven't already done so. I understand he spent several hours looking things up before answering.

I saw Nancy & her charming children when she was home. I hope to drive east for C.D.'s commencement if I can. Don't you get for certain and am not sure about driving to Baltimore. I'd like to. Did I tell you announcement is recently made of the marriage last Sept. of Elinoor Cary and Walter Murray; affectionately mother.